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Chairman: Mr. Kmoníček ..... (Czech Republic)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Kuznetsov

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 134: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*) (A/58/613, A/58/704 and A/58/746)

1. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff (A/58/704), said that the audit had focused on appointments of staff in the Professional category and above made during 2002. Of the 105 vacancies filled, 103 had been advertised before the introduction of the new staff selection system, which had come into force on 1 May 2002. Those 103 posts had been filled on the basis of recommendations of the appointment and promotion bodies under the "old" system. The audit had also reviewed pending recruitment actions initiated in 2002.

2. The average time taken to fill the 105 vacancies in 2002 had been 347 days. That significantly exceeded the goal of 120 days set in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/55/253 and Corr.1) and was attributable mainly to the substantial effort required to process the almost 13,800 applications received and the problems encountered with the Galaxy system, which was still being developed at the time.

3. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) had found that the criteria for determining staff members' eligibility to apply for vacancies had undergone significant changes with the introduction of the new staff selection system in May 2002. The new system appeared to allow staff members to be considered for posts that were two or more levels higher than their current level. OIOS was concerned that that provision was not articulated in the Secretary-General's report or explicitly enunciated in the relevant administrative instruction. The lack of clarity with respect to eligibility criteria might have deprived many staff members of the opportunity to compete for posts. It also increased the risk of arbitrariness in recruitment, a problem that the existing control mechanisms might be unable to prevent. The Office of Human Resources Management had accepted the recommendation of OIOS that it should review and clarify the eligibility criteria.

4. With regard to geographical distribution, in broad terms, the nationalities of staff recruited by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2002 had been well dispersed. There had also been an improvement in the Department's gender ratio during the year, with 35 per cent of the recruits being women.

5. OIOS had made five recommendations as a result of the audit, all of which had been accepted. The Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had initiated the necessary action for their implementation. OIOS would be following up on those matters as part of the Secretariat-wide review of human resources management mandated in General Assembly resolution 57/305.

6. Turning to the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the impact of the recent restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/58/746), he said that the evaluation had involved the examination of documents, questionnaires and interviews of management and staff, both at Headquarters and in the field. The results of recent oversight studies and reviews of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had been taken into account, and the views of Member States and other stakeholders had been sought. OIOS appreciated the cooperation extended to it by the management and staff of the Department during the exercise.

7. OIOS had found that, while more time was needed for the reform of the Department to realize its full impact, the process was on the right track. Restructuring had enhanced the Department's strategic and analytical capacity and its ability to handle complex, multidimensional operations. Cooperation with stakeholders had become more focused, consistent and comprehensive. The Department was in the process of creating a reliable mechanism for identifying best practices and institutionalizing them as established policies.

8. Nevertheless, there remained room for improvement. The report's 30 recommendations were aimed at helping the Department to reach the objectives of the restructuring in an efficient and effective manner. While the recommendations covered a wide range of issues, he wished to highlight four key areas. First, there was a need for a comprehensive, coherent and consistent set of policies embracing all activities. The Department should establish an effective

mechanism for developing, promulgating, maintaining and updating its policies through authoritative documents and train staff in their implementation. Second, in consultation with its partners and stakeholders, it should study the practical application of various models for the strategic and operational planning of peacekeeping operations with a view to formulating clear and effective policies and procedures that would be consistently applied. Third, all prior objectives and commitments in the area of information management and information technology development should be implemented without further delay based on an action plan with clearly set deliverable outputs, timelines, benchmarks and resources. Fourth, the Department should adopt a sound and transparent procedure for reviewing the strength, structure and deployment of its staff.

9. The Department concurred with the recommendations of OIOS, and action on some of them was already under way. OIOS believed that the Director of Change Management should play a key role in the implementation of its recommendations and in the reform and restructuring in general. The efficient management of change and the effective repositioning of the Department's capacity would be essential if it was to meet successfully the new challenges that continued to emerge.

10. The report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the administration of peacekeeping trust funds (A/58/613) summarized the results of an audit of the administration of peacekeeping trust funds conducted by OIOS at Headquarters during October and November 2002. The objective of the audit had been to assess whether the trust funds had been effectively utilized and whether proper guidance had been provided to the persons responsible for managing those funds in the field. The audit had covered 31 trust funds related to peacekeeping operations for the fiscal year ended 30 June 2002. Those funds, which had had a combined balance of almost $170 million, at the end of the audit period, were administered by individual peacekeeping missions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs.

11. Eight trust funds with a combined balance of more than $53 million had shown no expenditures, transfers or adjustments during the period under review. In most cases, those funds had been established in the early 1990s for peacekeeping missions that were now closed. OIOS recommended that donors should be approached with a recommendation for redirecting the remaining resources. Where necessary, a new implementing office should be designated. If that was not feasible, the trust funds should be closed and the unspent balances returned to donors. OIOS was of the view that the remaining resources could be used for related political, humanitarian or development activities in the locations where the trust funds were originally established. The process of identifying and redeploying dormant fund balances needed to be improved. The purpose of seven trust funds administered by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with a combined balance of almost $2 million needed to be redefined as their original purpose was no longer valid. Funds with small balances should be closed, while other funds should be utilized for current operations. Eleven trust funds with a combined balance of $111 million were being administered by peacekeeping missions. The issuance of a guidance manual would ensure greater consistency in their overall administration.

12. OIOS recommended the development of a mechanism to finance the administrative and management costs of peacekeeping trust funds from programme support costs and the introduction of standardized financial reporting. The establishment of a web site would enable the Department to highlight trust fund activities and provide information to Member States and the public about trust fund utilization.

13. He was pleased to note that the management of the offices concerned had already taken steps to implement the recommendations of OIOS. Nevertheless, the Office would continue to monitor and review the administration of peacekeeping trust funds.

14. **Ms. Stanley** (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey), the stabilization and association process countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), and, in addition, Iceland and Norway, said that the European Union considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the impact of the recent restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/58/746) to be one of the most important documents before the Committee. However, since some of the recommendations of OIOS

required policy changes, the report should also be brought to the attention of the Security Council and the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

15. The European Union was committed to effective peacekeeping, which was a core function of the United Nations. Accordingly, it had strongly supported the recommendations of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to plan, deploy and manage peacekeeping operations. Given the expected upsurge in peacekeeping activities, the report of OIOS offered a timely insight into the Department's ability to ensure effective backstopping of all peacekeeping operations. The European Union agreed that, while the reform was on the right track, some measures would need more time to realize their impact fully and certain areas still needed attention. Some of the shortcomings identified by OIOS gave cause for concern and the Secretariat should act on the Office's recommendations as a matter of urgency.

16. While the integrated mission task force concept was welcome, the principles had not been fully implemented and the concept required further development at the interdepartmental level. The European Union, moreover, agreed with OIOS that, while the Department's Military Division provided good operational support, the assessment of the military preparedness and effectiveness of forces in the field required greater attention. Such assessment should take place no later than one year after deployment.

17. It was unacceptable that the Department should have neither an information technology systems strategy nor a strategic plan for building and sustaining an information technology capability. The European Union expected the resources it poured into information technology to improve the efficiency and working methods of staff throughout the United Nations, particularly those in the General Service category. It regretted that the Department was continuing in an unstructured fashion and therefore fully supported the OIOS recommendation that the Director of Change Management should establish a departmental information technology committee to formulate and implement a strategic information technology plan.

18. The European Union also agreed that ongoing consultation between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was essential to ensure coherent approaches, especially with respect to United Nations missions in West Africa, and that regional synergies should be exploited where possible. It was also necessary to strengthen the linkage between the budgetary benchmarks and the Security Council reporting process. A more formal mechanism must be established to collect and disseminate lessons learned from staff returning from the field, while the exact role and functions of the Situation Committee needed to be clearly defined if it was to perform as expected, particularly in support of the security and safety of United Nations personnel in the field. The Director of Change Management must play a more proactive role in reviewing the organizational structure of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and ensuring that best practices were institutionalized, including through the maintenance of authoritative policy documents.

19. The report also touched on the issue of recruitment. The problems highlighted — teething troubles with the Galaxy system and the rapid deployment roster, the delay in restructuring the Field Service category, issues related to delegation of recruitment authority, and the lack of generic job profiles — must be addressed urgently if the Department was to be in a position to handle the expected upsurge in peacekeeping activities. The report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff (A/58/704) also noted such shortcomings as the lack of clarity in eligibility requirements and the need to standardize the ranking of applicants. While the system of desirable ranges did not apply to most posts in the Department and most troop contributors were represented, geographical representation and gender balance remained important issues for many Member States and further improvements could be made.

20. The European Union fully concurred with the recommendations contained in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the administration of peacekeeping trust funds (A/58/613) and noted with satisfaction that the Secretariat had accepted them unconditionally. It welcomed the establishment of a working group to review the management of trust funds but wished to receive clarification concerning the role the working group would play in oversight. There

should be some automaticity as far as the review of trust funds was concerned. The European Union would suggest that, when a trust fund had been inactive for more than one year, its continued existence should be reconsidered. While the dispatch to peacekeeping missions of draft standard operating procedures for the management of trust funds in peacekeeping operations was welcome, those guidelines should be promulgated and the Secretariat should indicate what authority would be responsible for ensuring compliance with the new procedures. Lastly, it would be helpful to receive an update on the discussions that had taken place within the working group on the issue of administration costs.

21. **Ms. Buchanan** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that the three delegations continued to value the contribution that OIOS made to the United Nations. Its recommendations were most helpful when they were practical, targeted and timely.

22. With regard to the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (A/58/746), the assessment of OIOS that the Department's capacity had increased and that the reform process was on the right track was reassuring. The implementation of the recommendations of OIOS should further enhance the Department's performance in such critical areas as integrated mission planning and incorporation of lessons learned into processes and guidelines. At the same time, the lack of progress in elaborating a coherent information technology plan was troubling, as were the limitations identified in the Department's ability to systematize policies and analyse the effectiveness of its peacekeeping activities. Peacekeeping was a critical area of the Organization's work, however, and the reform of the Department was a work in progress. The three delegations were therefore committed to ensuring that the Department had the right tools and resources to provide adequate support to peacekeeping operations.

23. Concerning the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting DPKO staff (A/58/704), she noted that the majority of the posts included in the audit had been advertised before the introduction of the new staff selection system. The Committee would be considering recruitment at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, when a fuller picture should be provided of the application of current recruitment policies and of the progress made in enhancing the recruitment process and the Galaxy system.

24. Concerning the audit of the administration of peacekeeping trust funds (A/58/613), she noted with concern that no guidelines had been promulgated for the management of those funds and that many funds with large balances were inactive. She welcomed the establishment of a working group to improve the administration of trust funds and looked forward to receiving its report at the Assembly's fifty-ninth session.

25. **Mr. Wittmann** (United States of America) said that his delegation would have preferred to have an outside organization conduct the evaluation of the impact of the restructuring of the Department. However, the report of OIOS (A/58/746) showed that the process was on the right track and that human resources issues required greater attention. In that connection, his delegation wished to caution against overly broad solutions. For example, rather than convert a large number of staff in peacekeeping missions from the 300 series of the Staff Rules to the 100 series, as the Secretary-General proposed to do, it might be more appropriate to review the status of the contract series.

26. His delegation shared the concerns of OIOS with respect to civilian police operations. Law enforcement issues increasingly determined whether missions could be downsized and it would therefore be helpful for the Civilian Police Division to have sufficient institutional memory to accomplish its mission. His delegation was pleased to note the evidence of increased cooperation and coordination among the different departments of the Organization, which had led to a vast improvement in the management of peacekeeping operations. In that connection, it supported the recommendation of OIOS concerning the integrated mission task forces concept.

27. The enhancement of the Force Generation Service had facilitated the planning and implementation of the military component of peacekeeping operations. In order to accomplish a peacekeeping mandate, it was essential to use the best available troops. His delegation therefore agreed with OIOS that the preparedness and effectiveness of forces in the field should be maintained at the high levels necessary. It also supported the Office's call for authoritative documentation of policies. Communication and training were vital for the

dissemination of policies, and the relevant recommendations of OIOS should therefore be implemented as quickly as possible. His delegation welcomed the implementation of results-based budgeting in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the quality of its application. While there were still improvements to be made, the Secretariat's track record of enhancing its products in response to the Committee's concerns should be noted.

28. Turning to the audit of the policies and procedures for recruiting Department of Peacekeeping Operations staff (A/58/704), he said that his delegation's views on delays in recruitment were well known. It accepted that the unprecedented number of applications during the audit period had caused difficulties, and it trusted that, as the Galaxy system was fine-tuned, similar situations could be avoided. The Secretariat should take note of the Office's recommendations on eligibility requirements and apply the guidelines contained in the human resources handbook. Gender balance in the Department was improving, and, while support account posts were not subject to the same stringent standards regarding geographical distribution as regular budget posts, the Department was acting responsibly in seeking to ensure a broad representation of Member States and troop-contributing countries.

29. The Secretary-General was to be commended on the progress made in enhancing peacekeeping operations and his delegation looked forward to evaluating new proposals for further improvements based on the recommendations of OIOS.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.